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Bungled Bug

To a weird campaign already marked by the ludicrous stumbling of front-runners and the assassin's sick act at Laural, we may now add the case of the bungled burglary and bugging of Democratic National Committee headquarters. It is a mysterious case, and the core of the mystery is why anyone would consider such a step necessary at all.

Through all the stiff-lipped who-us? protestations of John N. Mitchell as chief of the opposition campaign, this is the question that persists. If Macy won't tell Gimbel, it's because he knows Gimbel desperately wants to know and might profit by what he has to tell. But what earthly reason could the Republicans or anyone else have for sending five microphone-laden operatives to the Democratic nerve-center in the dead of night? What nuggets of intelligence could be mined from an operation admittedly tapped-out, in hock to the telephone company, and drained by a free-for-all over who will lead it into a still tougher fight as the odds-on underdog in November? What, especially, could be gleaned from such a sorry source by an opposition reveling in its fourth year of power and already counting its 10 millionth dollar in preparation for the new battle?

Add to these purely political puzzles the question of sheer ineptitude in the break-in and bugging attempt. If, as the Pentagon Papers indicate, the CIA was the nation's best intelligence arm and if, as the Associated Press tells us, one of the bugging case defendants is a former CIA agent now employed by the Republican party's security agency, what new light does this throw on the intelligence difficulties besetting us in Vietnam all these years? If one bungles an attempt to steal information from a source which thrusts it readily, even excessively upon the public in tons of news releases and canned speeches, how can one hope to match the sophisticated intelligence operations of a stealthy guerrilla enemy in Southeast Asia?

Beyond all this, however, there is one more point mentioned by Lawrence F. O'Brien, the Democratic chairman. The incident, he notes, raises "the ugliest questions about the integrity of the political process. . . ." Those questions are not altogether dispelled by Mr. Mitchell's disclaimer.

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STATINTL

The CIA looks good in Pentagon papers

By PAUL W. BLACKSTOCK

Ever since the Bay of Pigs fiasco in April, 1961, the Central Intelligence Agency has had a bad press in this country and abroad. The 1937 "révelations" that the agency had secretly financed the National Student Association, plus a number of university-affiliated research institutes and anti-Communist cultural fronts, came as a shock to both students and the public.

Harold Wilson, when appointed shadow Foreign Secretary, rushed to Washington to assure President Kennedy that Labor would stand four-square behind the U.S. in the Far East. There is no evidence that he subjected American intentions to any very close scrutiny. He recognized a fellow Boy Scout when he saw one, and did not scruple to borrow the Kennedy overblown rhetoric in explaining to doubting colleagues the nature of Britain's East of Suez peace-keeping mission.

Professor Blackstock, a former military-intelligence research analyst and author of several books on the intelligence process, now teaches at the University of South Carolina.

As the United States became bogged down in the Vietnam quagmire and the student anti-war protest gathered momentum, the CIA became a favorite target of abuse. Agency recruiters were driven from college campuses. CIA-financed study centers were "trashed" at a cost of many thousands of dollars. New Left orators, armed with a sense of outrage and an encyclopedic ignorance of the intelligence community and its functions, instinctively assumed that the CIA was a major factor in the escalation of the war in Vietnam.

But the Pentagon study of the war, recently published by the New York Times proves conclusively that the Don Quixotes of the New Left have been charging at the wrong windmill. For many years and at critical stages of the escalation, the CIA and other members of the intelligence community, especially the State Department Bureau of Intelligence and Research repeatedly warned against the hazards involved, including flat predictions that the strategic bombing of North Vietnam would fail to accomplish its objectives.

Deceived Themselves

How these estimates and warnings were ignored by top policy-makers as they carried out their deliberate and "immaculate deception" of the American public is one of the more fascinating aspects of the Pentagon papers. But in deceiving the public, the decision-makers also deceived themselves, and eventually came to believe optimistic "military progress" reports, released to the public as based on the "latest intelligence," when in fact at the highest level, the estimates were only "best guesses" from the field, including typical "snow-

job" briefings in Saigon, deceived only those officials, either civilian or military, who wanted to believe them.

What is the "intelligence community"? How is it organized and what role should it play in decision-making at the national level in such foreign entanglements as the war in Vietnam? The answers to these questions have been cloaked in secrecy when they should be a matter of public knowledge.

To begin with the basic institutions, the U.S. intelligence community is made up of the separate agencies of such key government departments as State and Defense, the National Security Agency, and the CIA, which has the overall responsibility for "coordinating, evaluating, and disseminating intelligence affecting the national security."

"First Line Of Defense"

It has often been said that "intelligence is the first line of national defense." Most citizens are vaguely aware that foreign policy and military decisions are made by the President with the advice of his secretaries of State and Defense, based, in theory at least, on the best information available to experts throughout the government. The collection, evaluation and dissemination of such information is one of the primary functions of intelligence.

But in foreign and military affairs, strategic decisions should also take into

account careful estimates of the capabilities and probable courses of action of friends, allies, neutrals and "enemies." The production of such national estimates is a second major function of the entire intelligence community, although the board of estimates in the CIA coordinates the individual agency contributions and disseminates the final results.

As a rule, the various intelligence agencies are staffed on the working level by thousands of anonymous civil servants whose intelligence and analytical duty are seldom equaled elsewhere in either government or private enterprise.

Many of the men on the CIA's Board of National Estimates and its staff have more than two decades of intelligence experience. Better than 90 per cent of the officials on this top echelon have advanced academic degrees in history, political science, or economics directly pertinent to their work. About 75 per cent have enhanced their area and subject knowledge by living overseas. The estimators in State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research are equally competent and well-qualified.

Advice To President

On the national level daily and weekly reports are promptly distributed to the President and his chief advisers, and special estimates or briefings are made as required in response to developing crises. In short, the intelligence community provides the decision-maker with carefully evaluated information and estimates which he can either use for guidance or disregard.

History is full of illustrations how national leaders have ignored the estimates of the intelligence agencies with disastrous results. Napoleon's intelligence aide, the Marquis de Caulaincourt, explained why, for obvious strategic reasons, the planned invasion of Russia would fail. His advice was ignored.

A century later, Adolph Hitler's ambassador in Russia, Count Brockdorff-Rantzau, used the same reasoning in his estimate of why Hitler's plan would fail. His warning was also ignored and Hitler launched his invasion, which was widely heralded as the final showdown in his lifelong crusade against world communism. The campaign ultimately floundered in a sea of blood—20 million Russian casualties alone, not to mention German losses which also ran into the millions.

Nothing quite as dramatic has hap-

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Free and Secret?

Among the problems of the day—the new and grim day of this final third of the Twentieth Century—none is more agonizing than the one Richard M. Helms, director of the Central Intelligence Agency, raised in his address to the newspaper editors in Washington. He cited with the sober respect it deserves one conviction of many serious students of government: “I cannot give you an easy answer,” he said, “to the objections raised by those who consider intelligence work incompatible with democratic principles. . . .”

Yet the question must be answered, and short, to be sure, of infallibility, has been answered in other democratic countries much as we have answered it here. The French and British, for instance, have gone ahead with intelligence services while maintaining democratic norms. In Canada, just emerging from a security crisis rooted in domestic rather than foreign attempts against government, the question has been freshly re-examined. The Justice Minister in the Trudeau cabinet concludes that no doctrine of democracy denies it the right of self-preservation. Mr. Helms pleads that the nation must to a degree rely “on faith that we too are honorable men devoted to her service.” Yes, on faith, and as Mr. Helms added, on unswerving vigilance in the federal agencies supervising CIA to the very threshold where secrecy must set in.